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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Kansas English" contains four articles related to popular culture, censorship, and religion. "Popular Culture Studies: A Complement to the Humanities" by Michael Marsden, focuses on the relationship between popular culture studies and the humanities, including English. "Popular Couture: La Vie En Blue" by Richard Martin, examines the appeal of blue jeans (denim) in contemporary popular culture. "Censorship: What To Do About It? A Modest Proposal" by Rollin Douma argues that the use of a written book selection and complaint policy containing the American Library Association's and the National Council of Teachers of English's guidelines effectively inhibits censorship in schools. "Teaching About Religion Through the Language Arts" by Galen Boehme discusses the possibilities for teaching about religion in the public school, especially through language arts coruses. (TS)

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Donald Stewart
Editor

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Popular Culture Studies: A Complement To The Humanities

by MICHAEL T. MARSDEN

The relationship between Popular Culture Studies and traditional disciplines is too often marked disdain and separation instead of mutual cooperation and encouragement. Both can gain from and contribute to such a relationship. For far too many academics, Popular Culture Studies are still less than respectable; and for far too many Popular Culturists traditional disciplines remain outside their interests and explorations. It is the primary purpose of this article to focus on the relationships that exist between Popular Culture Studies and more traditional areas of inquiry for the purpose of illustrating how, in the very specific case of English and Popular Culture, Popular Culture Studies are in fact a complement to the Humanities, not a replacement or substitute for them as many of its detractors claim. Popular Culture Studies only have meaning and value as they exist within the larger context of humanistic inquiry.

Providing a workable definition of Popular Culture is a task that is too often and too easily avoided. Popular Culture can be said to be the folklore, or the shared traditions, of an industrialized society that is most often transmitted through the mass media. Popular Culture is that by which a majority of the people in a given society are defined and described. The two words in the term can be usefully separated for the purpose of further clarifying the overall meaning. By "popular" is meant the people under analysis and by "culture" is meant, in the words of Ortega y Gasset," that which a man has in his possession when he has forgotten everything he has read."

Popular Culture has been variously defined as those things a person does when he/she is not working, or as the culture shared by the least common denominator of a society, and thus aesthetically without merit. These less than accurate definitions involve whole sets of cultural assumptions, such as the inherent aesthetic inferiority of anything which is commercially successful. Perhaps Russel Nye in his excellent introduction to his monumental, *The Unembarrassed Muse*,[1] has put that argument, along with the more famous one about the lack of curvature to the earth's surface, to rest forever!

As a study Popular Culture should not philosophically be considered a discipline even though at Bowling Green State University the Study of Popular Culture is housed in a new academic department. Popular Culture is not a discipline; it is a function, a way of critically comprehending the world, a set of attitudes about the culture that is shared by large numbers of people. If Popular Culture is anything, it is a supradiscipline. Popular Culture should and must cross any and all disciplinary lines and it should foster a basic respect (not approval) for the culture of the society under investigation.

Popular Culture is not geographically bound; that is, each nation has both its own popular culture in one form or another, be it the Japanese consumer ethic or a Peruvian soccer game, as well as popular culture elements that it shares with other

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countries and societies, such as an appreciation of automobile racing. American Westerns are enjoyed the world over and are widely imitiated in China, Japan, Germany, France and Italy. *Bonanza* may well be America's most important export! Successful investigations of cultural similarities on the popular level might well prove to have tremendous international significance.

To date the vast amount of research in Popular Culture has been directed towards American Popular Culture.[2] The most successful methodological developments have included the study of popular formulas, most notably the Western formula by John Cawelti,[3] and the study of popular icons first suggested by a collection of essays entitled, *Icons of Popular Culture* edited by Ray Browne and Marshall Fishwick.[4] More recent studies of the function of stereotypes, popular myths and beliefs, analyses of public dreams,[5] etc. are just being undertaken in depth. We will have to wait a few years for the results, or perhaps even contribute to those results ourselves.

One of the larger functions of the Study of Popular Culture is to put the humor back into humanism. The essentially uplifting nature of humanistic inquiry seems to somehow have become lost in the mad scramble for academic respectability. Traditionally, we have abstracted from the total body of received culture that portion which some have said to be the best that men and women have thought and said; unfortunately, too much of that material turned out to be dull. What Popular Culture Studies demand is that we hold all of our received culture up to the light of intellectual scrutiny, examining its nature and patterns for all they can reveal to us about the people who enjoy it and participate in it. Popular Culture Studies are by their very nature broadly based inquiries into the human condition often dealing with material that is more often emotional than intellectual, more ephemeral than eternal, but nonetheless important because of these qualities.

It has been frequently claimed that Popular Culture Studies deal with trivia and/or nostalgia. Such changes are often the result of one's perspective. No one would seriously defend the continued investigation of material that would prove to be valueless. Nor would one really defend nostalgic trippings into the comfortable past of half-remembered emotional truths about the 1920's or the "happy days" of the 1950's. But the door should always be open for the serious investigation of any culturally popular topic until such a time as it is shown to be without significance. No one would seriously question the importance of studying film or even television since they are so pervasive in our society; but for some reason studying beer can collectors brings a smirk to the lips.

Popular Culture Studies require the same intellectual rigour and seriousness that traditional studies always have. The subject matter is as complex in its own way, if not more so, than traditional areas of inquiry and it is oftentimes more enjoyable since Popular Culture is so closely tied to our leisure-time activities.

Popular Culture Studies do not, contrary to the critics' claims, lower academic standards. In fact, they raise them to the level where they should have been in the first place! For example, if Popular Culture Studies are taken seriously, they demand the rewriting of literary history which has generally excluded popular literature from its analysis. The same is true of a large portion of historical research which has relied too heavily on elitist sources, ignoring the popular truths that lay scattered about the

study in easily accessible sources or on the stacks near the research carrel in ignored heaps.

As a study in and of itself Popular Culture certainly needs no justification. Its overwhelming existence speaks to the question. It can, however, also be studied as a bridge. To teach the difficult concept of Transcendentalism it might, for example, be useful to begin with a popular treatment of it in something like *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and work backward to Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings after establishing a sound philosophical base through an analysis of one or more popular versions. Popular Culture Studies often work backwards, from the present to the past.

An often raised objection of Popular Culture Studies is that they only focus on the present, the ephemeral, that they only focus on fads or the passing fancies of a society. However, an historical perspective is essential to Popular Culture analysis. Without such a perspective, Popular Culture becomes all that its detractors say that it is. To fail to realize that "The Ed Sullivan Show" has its roots in Vaudeville and that Vaudeville in turn has its roots in the popular theatrical tradition of the nineteenth century is to miss the most important point about the popular arts—continuity, or in the words of Marshall McLuhan, the content of a prior medium always becomes the content of a new medium.

Popular Culture Studies, then, are not a series of random inquiries into interesting aspects of ephemeral culture, but rather a natural, evolutionary outgrowth of traditional humanistic analysis. While we have considered it quaint, and even fundable, to study the "folk" or to start a symphony orchestra in some culturally forsaken but budding village-city, we have looked down upon the vast majority of the culture most of the people participate in and perhaps even value. We have chosen to ignore the reality of our culture.

Popular Culture Studies can significantly enlarge the subject matter of any curriculum, adding to it new life, giving it balance and proper perspective. The old divisions of "culture" into high, middle, and low no longer can be seen as viable; for the reality blurs it not even renders obsolete such evaluative categorizations. It seems more useful to speak not as Matthew Arnold would of the best that men and women have thought and said and written but confront *what* men and women have thought and said and written. Better for the student of today's world to begin with the culture as it exists and then, after achieving a broadly based understanding of the subject he/she is going to deal with, attempt to change it for the betterment of mankind.

It seems to me that the question of Popular Culture's role in the English classroom, or the History or Social Studies classrooms for that matter, is not *if* but *how much*. It would seem that it is impossible to teach the literature of any period of time effectively without giving close attention to the popular culture out of which it grew and which fostered it. If, for example, one were teaching the literature of the American Revolution it would be foolish to ignore the popular culture of the Revolutionary period and not broaden the understanding of the student for that literature which was neither created nor enjoyed in a cultural vacuum.

In another article I have taken some effort to illustrate how Popular Culture can function first as a "subject" in the English classroom and second as a "tool." Basically, what I attempt to present in that article is the case, in the first instance, for Popular Culture as a subject matter worthy of classroom effort because the students are

overwhelmed by the subject matter and need to be taught how to deal with the material intelligently. For this purpose Popular Culture needs to be divided into process and product so that the students can be informed of both the ways in which a cultural product is developed, then delivered to them on the screen, over the radio, or at the newsstand, as well as the product itself and its possible or even probable effects upon them. Thus the students can become more intelligent citizens.

Consider, for example, the tremendous impact the medium of television has had upon our contemporary society. Television is one of our newest and least understood mass media. By the time a child enters kindergarten, he/she will have spent more time in front of a television set than a college graduate will have spent in the college classroom over four years. By the time that same child reaches his/her eighteenth birthday, he/she will have seen at least 350,000 television commercials. And by the time that same person reaches retirement he/she will have spent, it is estimated, ten years of his/her life in front of the modern household god—the television set. Television is not just a diversion; it is a very important part of our lives that cannot be ignored and we must learn to deal with it.

It takes a person such as anthropologist Edmund Carpenter in his book, *Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*, to focus in on what a medium like television can do to a society by examining its effect upon the people of New Guinea who were recently introduced to the medium and its effects." By studying such media phenomena we are better able to glimpse some aspects of its long-range effects upon us which have been obscured because of its pervasiveness as an information and entertainment medium in our environment.

In the second instance in the article I focus on the usefulness of Popular Culture as a tool in the English classroom and its many applications for the study of both English language and literature. For example, take the case of the television commercial which operates on the same basic principles as does good, clear writing. A television commercial has a clear beginning, middle and end and the thesis, or controlling purpose, is stated succinctly in the first few seconds. Television commercials never make generalizations without providing more than an adequate number of specific, concrete examples. The television commercial might well be referred to as the sonnet form of the twentieth century since it does operate much as a sonnet does within very definite and strict limitations. Instead of 144 syllabes with a definite rhyme scheme, the television commercial has 60 seconds at the most to deliver its message and win its audience. Like the sonnet, the television commercial is a highly rigorous structure within which there is immense freedom for the creative imagination.

One of the strongest examples of the importance of Popular Culture in the English classroom is the demonstration through the popular media that writing is not irrelevant in today's society but rather at the very core of all of the mass media. Popular Culture must begin in writing and then be translated into visual forms. Writing is too often taught in isolation from the other forms of modern communication, as some sort of special skill that marks the educated person rather than as a basic skill common to all art forms on all levels. A good illustration of this would be to take the students through the various stages of the production of a typical television program, perhaps even one of their own creation, from the preparation of the

treatment and selling it to financial backers, to the writing of the script, to the filming/videotaping of the program, and through the publicity blurbs and newspaper reviews. Such an exercise would show how important print is to the modern, visual person; without writing skills a person cannot function well as a creator or intelligent consumer of popular culture.

Popular literature can function as an excellent bridge between literature that students can more immediately deal with and literature they would have a great deal of difficulty dealing with directly unless they were given a significant amount of preparation. For example, instead of plunging students into the often difficult waters of *Moby Dick* and asking them to dive or float, why not begin with the very popular bestselling book and blockbuster movie *Jaws*, which bears striking parallels to Melville's classic?

Popular Culture Studies, then, can be well utilized as both subject matter and tool in the English classroom, helping to restore a certain completeness of perspective to a discipline that has all too often functioned as if it existed out of time and place instead of in the center of a society which is continually questioning its usefulness. Popular Culture and English are not mere traveling companions; they are true partners, each giving to and receiving from the other.

Too many Popular Culturists attempt to isolate Popular Culture Studies from the rest of the curriculum, suggesting thereby that the study of Popular Culture is the only viable, intellectual effort since Popular Culture encompasses so much of what we are. The true strength of Popular Culture, however, lies not in its isolation but in its mergings with existing disciplines (and ones not even yet dreamed of), broadening them and deepening its own perspective. If the Popular Culture Movement, as some people refer to it, were to be totally successful, that is if existing disciplines were to embrace and explore Popular Culture materials, then there would be no real need for Popular Culture Studies to exist as a separate thrust. The only ultimate justification for studying Popular Culture is as it fits within the largest possible definition of culture.

Popular Culture also affords a rare opportunity to experiment responsibly with pedagogy as well with subject matter, for it is not really enough in Popular Culture Studies to focus on new, unexplored materials, as exciting and involving as that can be. The approaches to the material should become metaphors for the materials being studied. For example, if the subject is TV game shows, then perhaps the class should become a TV game show for a day or two. A course in Popular Culture can certainly do more than just reflect on the "message" of the culture we live in; it can and should be concerned with the medium through which that message is communicated.

One particular experiment in pedagogy that has been found successful in our undergraduate program is the oral examination. In our freshman and sophomore level courses at least one examination, and preferably the midterm, is an oral examination on a one-to-one basis with the course instructor. This type of an examination allows for immediate feedback and also allows both strengths and weaknesses of the course and the student's work in the course to surface quickly and clearly. Normally the questions are distributed ahead of time so that in the context of the examination itself the questions function more as discussion catalysts and not as mere stimulants for which there is a specific response. For many students the oral examination is a

refreshingly humanistic experience. The cost to the instructor is not, however, slight, for it may take from twenty to thirty minutes to administer each examination. In the final analysis, though, the oral examination seems quite appropriate for our culture.

Another pedagogical approach we have encouraged is to allow students to research a topic and present the results in a non-written form such as videotape, film, or other format. We do not, of course, offer mini-courses in visual skills, and communication; but if the student already possesses such skills, we attempt to encourage him/her to utilize them in our courses. If a student learns nothing else, he/she will become aware of how difficult it is to communicate effectively in visual terms.

We have also made a definite effort to introduce as many primary materials —popular music recordings, popular films, television programs, etc.—into the classroom as possible. This direct approach is often highly effective because the students have really had the opportunity to examine the fabric of their popular culture outside of its normal context. The experience of viewing a popular television program on videotape over closed circuit in a classroom is significantly different from viewing that same program in the family living room as it was originally aired.

It is important to provide students with as many primary Popular Culture materials as possible to work with. We are fortunate in having excellent resources at Bowling Green State University for the study of Popular Culture. The point needs to be made that it is quite possible for similar collections, while not as broad but at least representative, to be built up at other schools with a minimum of expense. It is important for students of Popular Culture to confront the "things" of Popular Culture directly and not just ponder what others have had to say about them. The excitement of approaching material that has not been critically examined before is what motivates many students and what enlivens many a class discussion. Such excitement must remain a major part of any Popular Culture curriculum.

What is ultimately needed is not the development of a new supradiscipline called Popular Culture, but rather a reintegration of separate disciplinary strengths into a day of looking at the culture as a whole that results in honest synthesis. Popular Culture Studies exist to shed light on what has been ignored, abused, or damned. But they also exist to bring the Humanities and the Social Sciences back together again for they have split too far apart in search of identity and respectability. Popular Culture Studies are democratic in the best sense of that term and yet politically they have been forced to become exclusive (e. g. a person will study "Jazz" but not popular music), elitist in their own way (e. g. a person will examine American automobile designs but not the "Tin Lizzy"), claiming knowledge unavailable to the "Uninitiated" and worse yet, breeding specialists who work in "film" or "popular literature" or "sports" instead of in Popular Culture.

Popular Culturists should demand the same intellectual rigor of themselves and their students as other historians, literati, etc. demand of themselves and their students. Popular Culture Studies should not become intellectual slumming. Somehow it is assumed by both critics and practitioners of Popular Culture alike that the same rigor required for an understanding and appreciation of "high" culture is not required for comprehending the significance of Popular Culture artifacts, that Popular Culture is semi-transparent and needs only a cursory glance to crystalize its

existence. On the other hand, we do need to restore the balance of the humanities and even perhaps put a little joy back in learning. Maybe Popular Culture Studies can help towards those ends.

NOTES

The Department of Natural Resources

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Donald Charles Manprize
Houghton Lake, Michigan

Popular Couture: La Vie En Blue

RICHARD E. MARTIN
Fashion Institute of Technology

As an art historian, I believe that the most significant development of contemporary art has been the calculated avoidance of the canvas, in which the artist deliberately evades the traditional terms of painting on canvas. As a human being, I believe one of the most significant developments of contemporary popular culture has been establishment of a jeans culture, in which vast portions of the population are clothed in a blue blur of denim. The specific terms of that jeans culture are, however, good indications of the contemporary visual culture.

Although it was discovered in the Middle Ages and takes its name from a town in the south of France ("serge de Nimes," the cloth of Nimes, becoming denim), denim has achieved its greatest importance in America. In fact, denim was employed as the sail material on Christopher Columbus's Santa Maria. Later it became the hallmark of the California Gold Rush and of cowboys, thus acquiring connotations of virility and the unencumbered life. Denim remains a symbol of America as readily identifiable as the Statue of Liberty. Jeans are a mark of Americanized style eagerly sought on the Boulevard St. Michel and on Red Square. In the United States, its application has become extraordinarily diverse, from the upholstery of an American Motors car to chic luggage, evening wear for men and women, and the full range of home furnishings.

A large part of the appeal of denim is its comfort and washability, both of which have become associated with the social and personal freedom espoused and practiced by the young. In the 1950's the Establishment hero was aptly defined by his attire in Sloan Wilson's best-selling novel, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955). The disobedience and shame of the young disestablishment was, in addition, immediately stigmatized in the 1958 play *Blue Denim* and subsequent film) which recounted the difficulties of a young pregnancy outside of marriage. The woebegone lovers were as clearly stigmatized by their jeans as Hester Prynne had been by her scarlet insignia. Thus a lingering aversion to denim and association of jeans with evil and unsocial behavior found traumatic and stigmatizing expression in Herlihy and Noble's *Blue Denim*. The same association of denim and the rebel was constant in the brief, but influential, film career of James Dean, with whom denim became the sign of inchoate rebellion and the restlessness of youth. Of course, the polarity between denim and "proper" attire has been bridged in recent years, with the wearing of denim reaching from Alice Cooper to Gloria Vanderbilt Cooper. Moreover, denim has literally flowered in interpretive and esthetic variations.

Denim jeans and jackets are produced in enormous quantities. There are now boutiques which sell denim products exclusively. Department stores which once relegated denim to basement stores and uniform departments now give denim prominent placement in the leisure departments. It is precisely this mass-production and popular acceptance of a product more or less alike which has been the bane of those who fear uniformity or imposition of mass standards in an industrial or post-industrial society. Denim, however, provides the proof that this same uniformity may

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[illegible] to personal identification and individual control. Jeans of resistant manufacture are made individual by the person. The economic terms of the personalization of denim can be quite simple, including home fading, distressing, bleaching, whiskering, application of sequins or patches, and even the process of becoming worn, but the implications of these processes are enormous. The machine product is rendered highly personal and expressively unique. To the unconscious eyes, patches make a unique declaration to fashion denim, custom bleaching or patterns of tensions lend the aura of the handicraft to mass denim, wearing and tearing bring wealth and the implication of experience.

Denim, like much of the avant-garde thinking of the 1960's and 1970's has become a declaration of individuality in the midst of uniformity. Denim demonstrates that individual expression and the adherence of the mass-produced product are not incompatible; on the contrary, the product has become a prime opportunity for esthetic imagination and personal power.

The current state of the denim art has become highly commercialized, with the co-opting of personal options for denim by the manufacturers. To wit, the most expensive denims in the stores are faded and used denims, to which the purchaser has immediately acquire the appearance of experience. Correspondingly, many jeans are now sold in a market with embroidery and patches, but these commercial styles take their initiative from the popular style. Denim has since the seventeenth century held implications of revolt, but the current denim culture depends upon the acceptance of the various connotations of denim to versatility of both men and women. It claims a universality—to use an abused word—commitment. One of the last major statements of American Pop Art was Andy Warhol's recent cover for the Rolling Stones' Sticky Fingers album, which made the entire record jacket into a denim-view of a pair of jeans.

On a recent tax hearing three different times, I observed the slightly more than 99% of the residents were wearing denim in some visible form, whether in coats, skirts, jackets, or accessories. Clearly, denim has become one of our most permeable fashions. A New York restaurant and boutique, Serendipity Three, 225 East 60th Street, has recently opened a museum of denim under the administration of Cleo Watson, former director of the New Orleans Jazz Museum. The Serendipity collection of denim—ranging from the nineteenth century of Daniel Boone to Cher Bono's mini-mini skirt, Paul Newman's jeans, worn thrice and never washed, to Andy Warhol's Cadre, and various denim sculptures and objects—will initially become serendipitous as part of a national tour. What could be more American than apple pie? Perhaps the reply must now be denim.

Censorship:
What To Do About It: A Modest Proposal

[redacted]
Eastern Michigan University

[redacted]

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In selecting books for reading by young people, English teachers consider the contribution which each work may make to the education of the reader, its aesthetic value, its honesty, its readability for a particular group of students, and its appeal to adolescents. English teachers, however, may use different works for different purposes. The criteria for choosing a work to be read by an entire class are somewhat different from the criteria for choosing works to be read by small groups. . .

What a young reader gets from any book depends both on the selection and on the reader himself. A teacher should choose books with an awareness of the student's interests, his reading ability, his mental and emotional maturity, and the values he may derive from the reading. A wide knowledge of many works, common sense, and professional dedication to students and to literature will guide the teacher in making his selections. The community that entrusts students to the care of an English teacher should also trust that teacher to exercise professional judgment in selecting or recommending books. (THE STUDENT'S RIGHT TO READ, Urbana, NCTE, 1972, pp. 7-9)

Like the NCTE, the ALA maintains that censorship threatens the democratic guarantee to the freedom to read. The opening paragraphs of the ALA's FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT declare:

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label 'controversial' books, to distribute lists of 'objectionable' books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently arise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to the use of books and as librarians and publishers reponsible for disseminating them, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

We are deeply concerned about these attempts at suppression. Most such attempts rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising his critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject it. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected' against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression. (Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT, Chicago; ALA, May 25, 1953, revised January 28, 1972, p. 1)

And, too, while the NCTE's THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ affirms the Council's trust in the teacher's right to select books for student use, the ALA's FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT affirms the Association's trust in the librarian's right to select books.

It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority.

. . .

It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative reponsibility, bookmen can demonstrate that the answer to a bad book is a good one, the answer to a bad idea is a good one. (Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT, Chicago: ALA, May 25, 1953, revised January 28, 1972, pp. 2-3)

In sum, then, both the NCTE and the ALA agree that the public's right to read is a fundamental democratic guarantee and must be protected. Unfortunately, such statements of principle, no matter how valid and hopeful, cannot alone promise the attainment of the principle *in fact*. (Note the ever-increasing number of censorship incidents, increases recorded since the release of the statements above—and I don't mean to imply any cause and effect relationship.) To inhibit censorship we need a more utilitarian and reliable tool than a statement of principle. We need a legally binding declaration of means used to gain the desired end. Recognizing this, both the NCTE and the ALA recommend a course of action which promises to inhibit censorship, and a recent research study tends to confirm the course of action as valid. In brief, both professional organizations recomend that schools design and adopt a board-approved *written book selection policy*—a statement explaining the purpose, method, and criteria used to select books for class and individual use—and a *written book complaint policy*—a statement explaining the procedures used to acknowledge and resolve objections to books selected.

The NCTE recommends:

In each school the English department should develop its own statement explaining why literature is taught and how books are chosen for each class. This statement should be on file with the administration before any complaints are received.

Operating within such a policy, the English department should take the following steps:

Establish a committee to help other English teachers find exciting and challenging books of potential value to students in a specific school. . .

Devote time at each department meeting to reviews and comments by the above committee or plan special meetings for this purpose . . . Require that each English teacher give a rationale for any book to be read by an entire class . . . Each teacher should explain why he chose the book for a particular class and what his objectives are with regard to the specific problems, needs, and interests of that class. He should also identify any problems in the theme, tone, stance, or style of the book and how he will answer the censor, and the teaching approaches that will best serve the interests of literature, the book, and his students. . .

Report to the administration the books that will be used for class reading by each English teacher.

Such a procedure gives each teacher the right to expect support from fellow

teachers and administrators whenever someone objects to a book. (THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ, pp. 13-14)

And, if/when an objection is received, the NCTE recommends the following course of action:

> If the complainant telephones, listen courteously and refer him to the teacher involved. That teacher should be the first person to discuss the book with the person objecting to its use.
>
> If the complainant is not satisfied, invite him to file his complaint in writing, but make no commitments, admissions of guilt, or threats. Indicate that a form for the complaint will be sent to him.
>
> If the complainant writes, contact the teacher involved and let that teacher call the complainant . . . If the complainant is not satisfied, invite him to file his complaint in writing on a form to be sent to him. (THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ, p. 16-17)

The advantage of such a standardized procedure, according to the NCTE is that it

> . . . will take the sting from the first outburst of criticism. When the responsible objector learns that he will be given a fair hearing through following the proper channels, he is more likely to be satisfied. The idle censor, on the other hand, may well be discouraged from taking further action. (THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ, p. 17)

Although there may be more hope than certainty in the claim that the procedure will appeal to "the responsible objector" and discourage "the idle censor," the demand that the objection be filed in writing on a standardized from ("Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work") will require the objector to reflect seriously on a number of issues concerning the book and his objection; it requires him, in effect, to evaluate the book and its use with reason and insight.

Once the objector completes the form and submits it to the proper school authority, the NCTE recommends:

> The committee reviewing complaints should be available on short notice to consider the completed 'Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work' and to call in the complainant and the teacher involved for a conference. Members of the committee should have re-evaluated the work in advance of the meeting, and the group should be prepared to explain its findings. Membership of the committee should ordinarily include an administrator, the English department chairman, and at least two classroom teachers of English. But the department might consider the advisability of including members from the community and the local or state NCTE affiliate. As a matter of course, recommendations from the committee would be forwarded to the superintendent, who would in turn submit them to the board of education, the legally constituted authority in the school. (THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ, p. 17 and 19)

The ALA, although in a less comprehensive manner than the NCTE, also recommends that every school and public library formulate and use a written book selection and complaint policy:

> To combat censorship efforts from groups and individuals, every library should take certain measures to clarify policies and establish community relations. While these steps should be taken regardless of any attack or prospect

of attack, they will provide a firm and clearly defined position if selection policies *are* challenged. As normal operating procedure, each library should:

1. *Maintain a definite materials selection policy*. It should be in written form and approved by the board of trustees, the school board or other administrative authority. It should apply to all materials equally. . .
2. *Maintain a clearly defined method for handling complaints*. Basic requirements should be that the complaint be filed in writing and the complainant be properly identified before his request is considered. Action should be deferred until full consideration by appropriate administrative authority. (American Library Association, HOW LIBRARIES CAN RESIST CENSORSHIP, Chicago: ALA, February 1, 1962, revised January 38, 1972, p. 1)

In substance, the recommendations of the NCTE and the ALA propose that a written book selection policy contain, at minimum:

1. A statement of the philosophy and objectives of materials selection.
2. A statement that the governing board is legally responsible for the selection of instructional materials.
3. A statement detailing the delegation of the selection responsibility to appropriate certified personnel.
4. A statement of the criteria to be used in the evaluation of instructional materials.
5. A description of the procedures to be applied in the evaluation and selection of instructional materials.

And the ALA and NCTE recommend that a written book complaint policy contain, at minimum,:

1. A written book selection policy meeting ALA and NCTE recommended content.
2. A statement that the complaint be filed in writing and the complainant properly identified.
3. A statement requiring the establishment of a committee of the teacher group concerned with the selection of the material in question to review the complaint, and make appropriate recommendations to administrative authorities.
4. A statement authorizing the appropriate administrative authorities to act on the evaluation committee's recommendations.

Our concern, however, is not just with the substance of the NCTE and ALA recommendations, but with the effectiveness of the recommendations. We must ask, "Does the use of a board approved written book selection and complaint policy effectively inhibit censorship?" The findings of a study I concluded a year ago tend to answer this question in the affirmative. (Rollin G. Douma, BOOK SELECTION POLICIES, BOOK COMPLAINT POLICIES, AND CENSORSHIP IN SELECTED MICHIGAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, U of Michigan doctoral dissertation, 1973, pp. 1-151, *passim*.) Encouraging, huh? Let me summarize the study—its purpose, method, hypotheses, and conclusions—and then offer my modest proposal.

The purposes of the study were (1) to describe the content of the various book

selection and book complaint policies used by a selected sample of Michigan public high school English departments; (2) to compare the effects these policies have on the inhibition or resolution of censorship and (3) to provide a complete, sample book selection and complaint policy modeled on the best characteristics of the policies examined during the writing of the study. A questionnaire was mailed to each of 224 English department chairmen who taught in the public high schools of Michigan's six largest cities and their metropolitan areas; 127 replied. The respondents were asked to explain the nature of their schools' book selection policy, book complaint policy, and encounters with censorship incidents during a two and one half year period. Sixty-four (50 per cent) of the respondents reported that their schools received at least one objection to a book selected or recomended by an English teacher during the period covered by the survey. Sixteen (25 per cent) of these 64 reported that their schools removed from use the "objectionable" book.

The data from the questionnaires also supported the three hypotheses of the study. Specifically, the data showed:

1. Most English departments do *not* have a written policy explaining the procedures and criteria used to select books. Only 24 of the 127 chairmen reported that their schools have a written book selection policy, and only 7 of these 24 policies contained content recommended by the ALA and NCTE.
2. Most English departments do *not* have a written policy explaining the procedures used to acknowledge and resolve objections to books selected or recommended. Only 49 of the 127 chairmen reported that their schools have a written book complaint policy, and only 4 of these 49 policies contained content recommended by the ALA and NCTE.
3. English departments with no written policy are less successful in inhibiting or resolving censorship than English departments with one or both of the written policies. Of the 26 schools without a written policy which received objections, 9 (about 35 per cent) removed books; of the 38 schools with one or both of the written policies which received objections, 7 (about 18 per cent) removed books. Furthermore, the data revealed that no books were removed in schools where officials adhered to a written selection and complaint policy containing content recommended by the ALA and NCTE.

While factors not tested in my study may have influenced my conclusions, the data in hand suggest that the use of a written book selection and complaint policy containing ALA and NCTE recommended content effectively inhibits censorship. I therefore modestly propose that such policies be designed, approved and adopted by governing school boards, and used by all public secondary schools.

To aid you, I offer sample pages from a "model" selection policy containing ALA and NCTE recommended content. (The complete selection and complaint policy should contain an Introduction, the Philosophy and Objectives of Materials Selection, the Legal Authority for Selection with Appropriate Citation of State Statutes, the Delegation of Authority for Selection to Professional Personnel in the School District, Reference Aids Used in Selection of Materials, Criteria Used in Selection of Materials, Procedures for Handling Objections to Materials, and Complaint Forms. Separate Complaint Forms should be developed to cover 1. Books, 2. Other Printed Materials, 3. Audio-Visual Resources, and 4. Outside Speakers.) The "model" is a

composite of what seems to me the most inclusive and explicit elements in those policies sent by my sample, as well as in dozens of other policies I encountered elsewhere during the preparation of the study. Where ellipses appear in the "model," the reader is expected to enter the name of whatever person or committee seems most appropriate for his school or department.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY FOR SELECTION

Since the board of education is a policy-making body, it delegates to the professional personnel of the school district the authority for the selection of instructional materials.

In library materials selection, responsibility for selection and acquisition is delegated to the librarians and teachers, who carry out the practices in accordance with this selection policy.

The selection of required texts for a subject is determined cooperatively by the staff members of the department or school concerned. Optional, suggested, or outside reading called for by individual teachers is left to the careful and considered judgment of the teacher of the class concerned.

In addition, each school may provide a selection of reading materials for sale to students, and each school may provide facilities for special orders by students. Responsibility for the operation of such sales shall be placed within. . .

CRITERIA USED IN THE SELECTION OF MATERIALS

GENERAL CRITERIA

Materials shall be selected (1) to fill the needs of the individual school curriculum, based on the knowledge of administrators and faculty and (2) to fill the needs of the individual students, based on the knowledge of administrators, faculty, parents, and students.

Truth—encompassing factual accuracy, authority, integrity, and balance—shall be a basic requirement in the selection of informational materials. Art—encompassing qualities of imagination, creativeness, style appropriate to the idea, stimulating presentation, vitality, and distinction of format—are important factors in the selection of books of fiction, and of nonfiction as well.

In all cases, choice of materials will be made with the idea of INCLUSION of the best available rather than EXCLUSION for fear of pressure from an individual or group. The ___ Public School District agrees with the National Council of Teachers of English that "the value and impact of any literary work must be examined as a whole and not in part—the impact of the entire work being more important than the words, phrases, or incidents out of which it is made." (THE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO READ, p. 8)

Provision will be made, then, for a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with a diversity of appeal, and presentation of varied points of view, with the final decision for selection resting upon whether life is presented in its true proportions, whether circumstances are realistically dealt with, and whether the material is of literary value.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Fiction is selected to meet the needs of students varying in reading ability, social background, and taste. Fiction is selected not only to represent literary merit but also

to provide books that are competent and successful in all categories of fiction and to provide enjoyable experiences for readers of all ability levels. Although it is impossible to set up a single standard of literary excellence, it is the policy to select fiction which is well written and based on authentic human experience, and to exclude fiction which is incompetent, cheaply sentimental, intentionally sensational or morbid or erotic, and false in its representation of human experience.

Periodicals, newspapers, and *pamphlets* shall be selected on the basis of presenting factual information, matter of timely or current interest, divergent points of view, value in reference, and accessibility of contents through indexing.

Propaganda pamphlets are expected to be one-sided, but only those whose publisher's name and statement of purpose are clearly indicated will be selected.

Film and *filmstrip* selection follows the general policies and objectives outlined for all other instructional materials. Film content, subject matter, and treatment are evaluated in relation to their validity, lasting value or timely importance, imagination, and originality. Criteria for selection of filmstrips include content, quality of the visual material, accuracy, and clarity of accompanying script or recording, importance of the subject in relation to curricular needs, and the unique contribution of this medium in conveying subject matter.

Recordings, musical and nonmusical, in literary and non literary fields, are selected by the same general principles applied to the selection of other instructional materials, plus consideration of the value of sound in conveying the subject matter.

Materials obtainable without charge should be free from excessive amounts of advertising, distortion of fact or misleading statements, with the exception of propaganda material as noted earlier. In addition, gifts are accepted on the same general principles applying to the selection of other instructional materials.

CRITERIA CONCERNING SUBJECTS OF FREQUENT CONTROVERSY

In the selection of materials on religious and quasi-religious subjects, preference is given to the work of informed, well-established authors whose views may be of concern to the students using the material, no matter how unconventional or contrary to tradition these view may be. Works which tend to foster hatred or intolerance toward racial groups, cults, religious organizations, or religious leaders are subject to very careful scrutiny and are selected only if the work in question has convincing curricular value.

The selection of materials which deal with controversial problems and issues or provide basic information on any ideology or philosophy which exerts a strong force—either favorably or unfavorably—in government, current events, politics, education, or any other phase of life should provide as fully as practicably possible for all points of view.

Materials will not be excluded on the basis of the race, nationality, or political or religious views of the author, speaker, or creator if they meet all other requirements.

Materials which contain references to or incidents of sexual behavior, violence, or profanity are subjected to a rigorous test of merit, relevance, and value in meeting the objectives of the course for which they are selected. The maturity and experience of the students by whom the material will be used are taken into consideration. Elements of sexual incident, violence, or profanity do not, however, automatically

disqualify a work. Rather, the decision is made on the basis of whether the material presents life in its true proportion, whether circumstances are realistically dealt with, and whether the material meets the objectives of the course for which it is selected.

Goat Gland Specialist

"I'm just a simple person,
easy as an old shoe and,
even in my Kansas Admiral's uniform,
I don't get all swelled up,"
Doc Brinkley said as he brought
out the picture
of the log cabin where he thought
(though he was never sure)
he'd been born.
In a modest moment
floating down the Potomac on one
of his fleet of yachts
and flashing a large diamond stickpin,
white gold Shrine pin,
and a Rotary pin, blue and gold,
a large diamond in the center,
he would bow his head modestly
showing light brown hair,
a little reddish and gray at the temples,
lift his blue eyes,
depreciatingly raise his right hand
with the 11 carat diamond ring,
the cuff links twinkling with 2 diamond
studded lodge pins, how
(never ostentatiously)
the ring on his left hand weighing
12.92 carats and sound
a little like Jesus Christ,
but trying not, to, he'd say:
"I imagine there are many men
who are probably greater than I am."

Elmer F. Suderman
Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

Teaching About Religion Through the Language Arts

by GALEN R. BOEHME

The role of religion in the public school has consistently been a controversial issue in American education. A survey of United States Supreme Court records shows how perennial this question has been. Before the 1940's, the Court defined religion basically as the body of beliefs and practices upheld by an institutional church. In such cases as the *Vidal v. Gerald* (1844), the *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1924), and the *Cochran v. Board of Education* (1930), the Court approved respectively the use of the New Testament to teach moral truths in the public school, the constitutionality of the parochial school, and the use of publicly-owned textbooks in the parochial school.

In the cases decided during and after the 1940's, the Court broadened its definition of *religion* by saying that where religion refers to sectarian dogma, the religious refers to the quality of an experience, a range of attitudes, and/or the moral elements which unite people. Consequently, the school must not teach religion, but the religious. This feeling was most articulately stated in 1963 when the Court delared unconstitutional through the First and the 14th Amendments the issues in the *Schempp v. School District of Abington Township* and in the *Murray v. Curlett* cases. The first case concerned a Pennsylvania statute requiring a public school teacher to begin each day by reading without comment at least ten verses from the Bible. The second case questioned the legality of a 1905 Baltimore school board ruling that each school day begin with the reading of the Bible and with the reciting of the Lord's Prayer. In both circumstances, students participation was optional. Speaking for the majority, Justice Clark stressed that prohibiting religious practices in the school does not mean that religion cannot be studied in the classroom. In fact,

> . . . one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment.[1]

Justice Brennan supported Justice Clark's statement:

> The holding of the Court . . . does not foreclose teaching about the Holy Scriptures or about the differences between religious sects in literature or history classes. Indeed, whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion.[2]

Since this 1963 ruling, educators and curriculum designers especially in the language arts and in the social sciences have explored the legal possibilities for the study of religion in the public school. The reason is that the language, the literature,

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and the history of any group of people define most clearly man's relationship to what he considers ultimate—his religion; this is the God, a god, or the set of values to which he commits his life. One of the more active groups now concerned with religion in the curriculum is the Public Education Religious Studies Center (PERSC) at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. The organization distributes and discusses curricular resources and materials through teacher workshops and seminars on the academic study of religion in the public school.

A survey of the language arts resources available for the study of religion reveals the impact which the Christian religion has had upon the language and the literature of Western Civilization. Through Tyndale's translation of the Bible in 1611, such words as "beautiful," "long-suffering," "peacemaker," and "scapegoat" were introduced into the English language. In the mid-16th century, translator Miles Coverdale introduced such words as "kind-hearted," "loving kindness," and "morning star." "A still small voice," "a thorn in the flesh," and "the salt of the earth" are some of the colorful phrases of the English language originating from the Bible while Mary, John, Paul, Thomas, and Peter are now common names. Shakespeare used more than 1,200 Scriptural references or quotations in his works. The works of Donne and Milton are filled with Biblical allusions. Poe's stories, "The Telltale Heart" and "The Black Cat" show his struggles with such Biblical ideas as "the wages of sin is death" and "be sure your sin will find you out." Even *Robinson Crusoe* rests upon a Biblical foundation. In Defoe's original text, Crusoe's greatest victory was spiritual. His conversion came from his reading the Bible found in the chest washed ashore from a wrecked ship. When the man Friday appeared, Crusoe then "began to instruct him in the knowledge of the true God."

Other influences of the Bible are seen in such plays as Wilder's *By the Skin of Our Teeth* and Rice and Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* and in such novels as Douglas's *The Robe* and Steinbeck's *East of Eden*. Neither has any topic absorbed the attention of so many sculpturers and painters as have the characters of the Bible. Examples include Michangeleo's *David* and his paintings in the Sistine Chapel. In short, the language arts class allows many opportunities for an academic study of religion, whether it be an Eastern or a Western religion.

One high school English teacher who has developed worthy guidelines for teaching about religion in the language arts classroom is Thayer Warshaw from Newton, Massachusetts. His interest in the topic developed in the early 1960's when he discovered his students lacked what he considered essential Biblical knowledge. On an exploratory examination, his students most frequently listed John, Paul, Saul, as well as Luke as the author for the book of Psalms. They considered Sodom and Gomorrah "lovers" and listed Matthew, Mark, Luther, and John as the writers of the New Testament Gospels. Jacob wrestled "all night with *insomia*," the "seven thin cows in Pharoah's dream meant *no milk*," and "Salome danced for Herod in order to get *ahead*." Warshaw's thesis then is that "a knowledge of the Bible is essential to the pupil's understanding of allusions in literature, in music, and in the fine arts." Students need to be cognizant of Melville's *Moby Dick* with its Ishmael, Ahab, and Elijah; Michelangelo's *Moses*; Milton's *Samson Agonistes*; Faulkner's *Absalom!*; and da Vinci's *The Last Supper*.[1]

In his writings, Warshaw describes three techniques for relating the Bible to the

language arts course: studying the Bible in literature, studying the Bible as literature, and studying the Bible and literature. These techniques are worthy as they can be used to study the literature of any religion. In the Bible in literature program, students first study and understand a Biblical passage before they analyze a literary and/or an audio-visual source where that Biblical passage provides the central image, symbol, or allusion. In a unit on the creation, students would first read Genesis and then such supplementary reading as Asimov's "The Final Question," Twain's "The Diary of Adam and Eve," Teasdale's poem "Stars," or James Weldon Johnson's poem, "The Creation." From this reading could then emerge a discussion on the ecological implications of the Genesis account. Other possibilities associated with the Bible in literature approach include these: the Bible in music (Handel's *The Messiah*); the Bible in place names (Alexander, Kansas); the Bible in biology (Rose of Sharon); the Bible in film and movie titles ("The Private Lives of Adam and Eve"—1957); the Bible in literary titles (Uris's *Exodus*, 1958). Students could also study familiar expressions originating from the Bible, such as "spare the rod and spoil the child" and "a drop in the bucket." Aware of the source of these allusions, a student should see how an author uses the Biblical element to heighten the effect of a situation or a setting. Understanding the mental and physical anguish that Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane makes Harper Lee's scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird* more vivid when Atticus Finch agrees to defend the Negro in the rape charge.

In the Bible as literature, the second technique Warshaw lists, the literary craftsmanship of the Bible is stressed. Students consider the relationship between the form and the content of a Biblical section, measuring the effectiveness of the techniques in terms of their appropriateness to the substance. For example, it is not enough for the student to recognize that the speaker in the 23rd Psalm speaks about God, then to God. Instead, the student must ask why the change for only two sentences in terms of thought and meaning. One reason is that the use of "thou" in line eight indicates that God has become a personal entity to the speaker. The question is more easily answered when the Psalm is studied as an extended metaphor. The same principle applies to studying the Book of Job. Why is Elihu's speech placed just before the Lord's speech to Job? Why is the introduction and the conclusion of the book in prose form while the main action of the book is in poetic form? Does the form correlate with the thought found in each of these sections?

A study of the Bible as literature focuses upon the types of literature found in the Bible: epic literature, rhetoric, wisdom literature, lyric poetry, and prophetic literature. The following types are also found: short story (Ruth, Jonah); biographical narrative (Joseph, Gideon); ode (Song of Deborah); parable (excerpts from Matthew to John); doom song (I Kings 18, 19); and riddle (Judges 15). Students could compare the arrangement and the wording of common scriptural passages—such as the Ten Commandments and I Corinthians 13—in the various translations of the Bible. Through such a study, a student should note one literary trait characteristic of all the Biblical accounts—brevity. A scene is set, an account is given, and the concluding point is made with a minimum number of words. Few characters, with each one tersely described, appear on a scene at any one time. Nothing is told about the character's inner thoughts or motivations; the only character trait given is that essential for the

story. Finally, the progression of events in each account creates the suspense. Will Eve, for example, succumb to the serpent's wishes?

The third teaching technique Wurthaw lists concerns the Bible and literature. Here students focus upon themes—comparing the treatment and the structure of selected themes in the Bible with those found in literature. Whereas the Bible in literature approach focuses upon the treatment of definite Biblical allusions in literature, the Bible and literature focuses upon whatever similarities and differences may exist between the treatment of themes in the two sources. In studying the creation theme, students could use Freund's *Myths of Creation* where the creation stories of the Hindu, the Sudanese, and the Bolivian people are presented; these accounts could be compared with the Genesis story. Comparing the Primus Pilare of the Bible with the Pilare of Anatole France's "The Procurator of Judea" introduces an ironical element to the crucifixion story not usually considered. The themes in the works of D. H. Lawrence invite Biblical comparison. His novelette, "The Man Who Died," develops an unorthodox picture of Christ, a picture that will test the religious maturity of many college students.

The value of Wurthaw's thinking is that his three teaching techniques indicate how any primary religious source can be studied not so much for its monistic but more for its literary values. Furthermore, his techniques illustrate how a discussion of religious symbols and allusions can meaningfully evolve from the material already used in the classroom. Making the student aware of the religious dimension in his speaking and reading material shows him how religion is one of several major factors influencing the language and the literature of any culture. For example, any student reading American literature will encounter the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman—men whose works definitely carry religious implications. These works are more easily understood if one has some grasp of the Eastern religions—especially the Vedas of the Hindu religion.

The question now arises as to how the language arts teachers in the Kansas high schools are teaching about religion. I tried to answer this question in my doctoral dissertation of 1974 when I surveyed the interest of these teachers in teaching about religion. 28 of the 310 secondary schools had specific language arts programs focusing upon religion in literature. The majority of these programs were either nine or eighteen week programs entitled "The Bible as Literature." The objectives ranged from the very general to the very specific; some of the more specific objectives stated that a student should understand a historical Biblical person well enough to write a diary entry for him, or should explain why Genesis 1 and 2 were not written by the same author on the basis of word choice, style, tone, image of the divinity, and emphasis of thought.

The majority of the "Bible as Literature" programs focused upon the Old Testament with the emphasis given to Genesis, the Psalms, selected short stories (Ruth, Esther), and the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. When the New Testament was included, the selections revolved around the narrative elements of the life of Jesus from the four Gospels, around the structure of the parables (the pearl, the prodigal son, the vineyard), around Paul's writing techniques (especially I Corinthians 13), and around the element of prophesy in Revelations.

Several teachers have developed unique programs, emphasizing the inclusive

From A Reading Desk:

LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES, ed. by Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis with James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw. Abingdon Press, 1974. 352 pp.

JOYE ANSDELL
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Beginning in 1969 four summer institutes were held at the University of Indiana for secondary school teachers of English who wanted to develop or to improve courses or units using the Bible in their literature classes. *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, which is concerned with one of the four areas explored, grew out of those meetings.

From the start it was decided that the biblical narratives should be studied apart from other concerns, such as political or ethical philosophy. The authors' purpose to adhere to literary analysis and to avoid emphasizing historical and scholarly knowledge, except where it seemed necessary as in the case of Moses, is carefully followed. As they explained in their introduction, they examined "ironies and paradoxes, interaction among characters and among scenes, narrational intrusion, settings, development of thematic and imagistic patterns, transformations of character, and formal structures." Apart from the first two chapters the essays, which chiefly follow the natural order of the Bible, primarily discuss prose narrative and poetry, sometimes entire books and sometimes individual sections of books.

Chapters I and II are general essays dealing with literary criticism, specifically with critical approaches to the Scriptures. In Chapter I Kalman P. Bland, for example, indicates the importance of a close examination of the text. He illustrates this by pointing to passages where some phrases or repetitions may seem unnecessary but when closely studied present rewarding interpretations. Thus he urges readers to forego a passive reading expecting everything to be explicitly stated merely because the account is economically narrated. This first chapter provides a good introduction to a proposed study of biblical literature.

Although the writer of chapter II proves his thesis that the Bible in a secondary school curriculum should be approached through the familiar tools of literary criticism not through biblical scholarship, this chapter may well be omitted in the reading assignments made to students.

In the remaining chapters a dozen books of the Bible are discussed, in whole or in part. The length of time set aside for the study will determine how much of the material can be used. Even in an elective course of several weeks it may be desirable to omit some essays.

By the very nature of the material, doubtless the most difficult essays are those on Isaiah (chapter XII) and Revelation (chapter XVII). Professor Louis in his essay on Isaiah is concerned only with the poetry of chapters 49-55; this poetry may not have the appeal of some of the narratives in the Old Testament. In the final essay, Louis shows that the Revelation to John is full of symbols, of allusions and passages to the Old Testament. He comments, "It may be that Revelation is not teachable as literature. We may teach it as an example of a visionary experience and look closely at the quality, sharpness, and clarity of the visions. But that is not the same thing as teaching

it as literature." Despite this difficulty, the essayist discusses clearly the well-planned structure of the book, its use of imagery, of comparison and contrast.

Chapters III and IV analyze the opening three chapters of Genesis, the first two of which must of necessity be primarily concerned with how the creation story is told, what language and images appear, what structural devices are used. The literary skill of the narrator of the Adam and Eve story (Genesis 3) will, along with Genesis 1-2, provide an interesting beginning for a study of the Scriptures.

The essay (chapter V) on paradox and symmetry in the Joseph narrative should have particular appeal to the average student, in large part because of the narrative itself. Moreover Genesis 37-50 affords the student a comparatively easy grasp of such literary forms as repetition, pattern, and character.

In a relatively long but fascinating essay (chapter VI) James S. Ackerman explores the literary content of the Moses birth and youth story (Exodus 1-2), which serves as a transition from the Joseph narrative and as an anticipation of what is in store for the "sons of Israel." If Chapter VI is relatively simple, the same can not be said of Hillel Barzel's essay (chapter VII) on Moses as a complex personality, embracing both tragedy and sublimity. It examines somewhat more abstract ideas, making frequent use of comparisons with art (Michelangelo, for example), with poetry (Heine and Bialik), and with narrative or essay (Kafka). This may be one of the chapters secondary teachers may decide to omit.

The book of Judges is rich in its variety, its diversity, as it presents a long series of episodes showing the relationship between God and the "sons of Israel" in an unstable period. Many ironies and seeming contradictions in this very human world are presented. Far too many of the judges are opportunistic, but throughout the book God shows his love for his people. The essay (chapter VIII) by Louis aptly shows all of this, but a study of this book as literature seems much less rewarding than, for example, the book of Ruth (chapter IX), of Jonah (chapter XI), or of Job (chapter XIII). Professor Louis's essay on Elijah and Elisha (chapter X) is clearly delineated too, but like the book of Judges the accounts in I and II Kings are full of difficult names and numerous episodes, quick vignettes of men and women such as Jephthah, Deborah, and Samson.

On the other hand the book of Jonah, as Thayer S. Warshaw indicates, provides a more detailed and interesting study of a man who fails to obey God, attempts to flee from the Almighty, is punished but also shown mercy. Jonah's motivation, the irony of Jonah's actions, the use of suspense are some of the literary concerns of the student approaching this book.

Much has been written about Job, an upright man who suffers a series of calamities, for the problems debated by Job and his companions are still common and of concern to us. There is much to consider in this essay by Professor Louis, who carefully examines Job's thinking as Job ponders his situation until he reaches the point where his own sufferings become less important and he probes the "seeming paradox between the all-righteous God and the prosperity of the wicked on earth." Not only does the book of Job develop many themes, but it is full of figurative language providing riches for the student of literature.

Unlike the book of Job, Ecclesiastes lacks the former's narrative structure and appeal. The essay (chapter XIV) by Professor Louis shows the Preacher as he questions

and theorizes, principally upon human vanity and upon the contradictions and inconsistencies of human experience. Although the essay is helpful and the book's concepts may have something to offer adolescents, the general effect is pessimistic. A teacher, however, may wish to explore it for its proverbs, allegory, autobiographical comments, and other devices.

The remaining two essays (chapter XV on Matthew by Jan Wojc[illegible] and XVI on Mark by Louis) do much to open up the New Testament for students. A pattern of emphasis in Matthew's Gospel, states the essayist, "makes Jesus' message about the two kingdoms . . . seemingly shape the very narrative which carries the message." He clearly points out the significance and artistry of this Gospel, the way in which the juxaposition of contrasting scenes helps to draw attention to the two kingdoms in the world; the kingdom of evil and the kingdom of heaven.

The writer on the Gospel of Mark takes a close look at the opening four chapters where the major themes are all introduced. He also examines with care the parables considering their purposes, their function in relation to the entire book, and the contribution each makes. He looks at the arrangement of scenes to determine why certain details, stories, foreshadowings, digressions appear where they do. Moreover he considers briefly what the narrative might mean to present day students of literature.

An initial look at this proposed text might suggest that it would be too difficult for the average senior high school student, but a careful examination shows a lucid style and clear explanations. The essayists are obviously aware of their intended readers. Nevertheless, any teacher making use of this book may need to adapt some of the material according to the class or even to omit several chapters (II, VII, X, XIV, even XVII for example). Time, however, may well take care of the latter. Certainly anyone planning a course in biblical literature might well consider this text.

From The State Specialist's Desk

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Three recent publications contain material that might be of interest to teachers of English language arts. References and excerpts included here have been selected to illustrate applicable policies or points of view, not to summarize the publications in their entirety. Much of the phrasing is the same as that used in the books.

The Title IV *Guidelines, Definitions and Standards, Part B, P.L. 93-380* has just been published by the Kansas State Department of Education and distributed to the chief school administrators of the state. The basic intent of Title IV Part B is to "combine within a single authorization" the programs authorized by ESEA Title II (library/media); the parts of ESEA Title III (innovative and exemplary programs) that relate to testing, counseling, and guidance; and NDEA Title III of 1958 (matching categorical aid for classroom instruction), except for Section 305. The funds appropriated must be used only for the same purposes and types of programs authorized under those earlier provisions.

These funds are to serve students "enrolled in private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools" equally with students in public schools, providing "secular, neutral, and nonideological services, materials and equipment . . ." and are to be administered by the public school agency.

Although "there is no intent to make any substantive change" in the types of eligible library/media or instructional materials and equipment, textbooks, which have not been eligible under the Kansas State Plans for ESEA Title II and NDEA Title III, are now eligible under Title IV. The statement of "Basic Limitations" given for standards for instructional equipment and minor remodeling reads thus:

> "Materials and equipment acquired under Title IV must be suitable for use in a public elementary or secondary school and with reasonable care expected to last for more than one year. General purpose equipment is not eligible for purchase with Title IV funds. Equipment such as seating, chalkboards, desks normally found in general classrooms, maintenance equipment, and replacement parts are ineligible. Funds under Title IV may not be used for any materials and equipment to be used in religious worship or instruction."

Regarding eligible equipment, this statement appears:

> "There is nothing inherent in equipment which in and of itself determines eligibility. *Rather it is the use to be made of the equipment and its direct relationship to instruction in the academic subjects* which determine its eligibility for purchase under an approved project."

The local public education agency will have primary responsibility for determining the district-wide use of Title IV funds, while the State Department of Education will be responsible for monitoring the use of such funds in a certain percent of the schools each year. During this 1975-76 school year both the old programs and the new are in force to facilitate the transition to Title IV. As in the past, this department strongly urges the local agency to involve classroom teachers in planning for the use of the funds and in selecting materials and equipment to be purchased.

Since the printing of the *Guidelines* was limited, interested teachers will need to contact their administrators in order to obtain more specific information from the publication.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091) has published under a 1975 copyright *This We Believe*, a statement prepared by the NASSP Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society. In it the committee has focused on the educational program of the secondary school. In making observations and proposals that are "practical and workable," the group has kept in mind its introductory statement that "Secondary schools reflect more than do most institutions the forces of change in society," and that this adaptability is perhaps its most characteristic trait. At the same time, the secondary school's central purpose has remained essentially fixed: ". . . to develop the talent of each student which in turn would contribute to the general welfare" as the democratic idea.

With careful reasoning introducing and following the statements of beliefs given in bold type, the task force has made a number of observations which, though not closely related to one another as they appear here, suggest directions that may affect the priorities and needed competencies of classroom teachers.

The NASSP believes that —

— The school can be effective when goals are clear. The school must place a new emphasis on assuming the leadership for gaining a certain public agreement about the purpose of secondary education. While the school should be responsible for both the intellectual and the social growth of students, because of the nature of modern youth the school has "found itself diverting resources toward the rehabilitation of students and away from the instruction of students." "The delivery of rehabilitative services . . . should be by youth-serving agencies in the community whose central mission is rehabilitation rather than education."

— Youth are segregated from adults by the economic and educational institutions created by adults, and schools have played a part in this segregation. "The adult world should be recoupled with youth. Youth can, and should, assume more responsibility for the welfare of others. Youth should have the opportunity to work seriously at community aims as well as for individual goals."

— The secondary school curriculum should be redesigned and placed in a more comprehensive setting, to include opportunities for service and work, serious contact with adult institutions, and experiences which span age and ethnicity. "Under this concept, the school will assume the responsibility for pulling together the learning resources of the entire community as well as developing courses for classroom instruction" — a new curriculum priority. The secondary school should coordinate all the learning resources and experiences of the community as they apply to each individual student and grant credit under the unit system for planned off-campus learning experiences. At the same time, however, "the basic responsibility of the secondary school is to instruct," and the schools "must make an honest appraisal of their own limitations to serve all needs of all youth."

— A comprehensive curriculum should include three categories of study: common learnings (not unified studies), optional courses, and community programs. Common learnings should include (1) communications: (the ability to read, write,

speak, listen, and interpret), (2) quantitative thought, and (3) American civilization.

— The secondary school should have three types of records available: (1) a record of measured proficiencies that indicate that the graduating senior is competent to enter the adult world, either a postsecondary educational institution or the world of work (first requirement: an ability to read, write, and compute with specified proficiency); (2) a record that the student has completed the planned learning experiences, stated in terms of courses and units of credit, which may or may not have produced observable evidence of learning; and (3) a diploma which is standard currency nationwide (first requirement: functional literacy in reading, writing, and speaking) indicating a combination of (1) and (2), the bestowing of which corresponds to the ceremonial celebration in every society of a youth's entering the adult world.

— The secondary school should develop an interlocking coordination with postsecondary educational institutions that would, in large degree, do away with the traditional concept of "belonging to The Class of ——" and would permit and even encourage academically inclined high-school students to take postsecondary studies on campus taught by secondary teachers, on campus taught by college or career instructors, or off campus at another institution. Within this concept, "the secondary school curriculum should be expanded vertically into college level courses, as well as horizontally into the community." Also within this concept, the term "dropout" would become obsolete. Rather, students might "stop out" or "stop in" as it seems appropriate to their goals, but they would not drop out of education.

Reading this small paperback book might help a classroom teacher communicate with his/her principal with great understanding.

Writing Mechanics, 1969-1974: A Capsule Description of Changes in Writing Mechanics, issued by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in October 1975, presents in brief form the information that has sparked much of the current outcry that "American teenagers are losing their ability to communicate through written English." (Writing Report No. 05-W-01, S/N 017-080-01854-3, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. $1.30 must accompany order.) While the *NAEP Newsletter* of October 1975 begins its lead article with these words, the *Capsule* offers more stabilizing specifics from which teachers of English can make some rational judgments.

This report compares the writing proficiency of 17-year-olds, 13-year-olds, and 9-year-olds with the proficiency of the same age groups in 1969. It deals with only "one particular writing task performed under one particular set of circumstances and in no way constitutes a definite study of writing in the largest sense of the word. The students who participated in this exercise were told to use their best writing but were not told that their papers would be examined for mechanical correctness."

Each essay was given two types of scores: (1) a "holistic" rating, the readers' responses to the *whole* essay to tell how *good* it is, with no precise evidence of or even reader reflection on the reasons for their decisions — the type of scoring that "has long been used to evaluate essays written for the College Boards and many other college entrance examinations"; and (2) a descriptive — not evaluative — score, in which paragraphs and sentences were coded and tabulated by type, length, complexity, spelling, grammatical or linguistic usage, and mechanics.

The report indicates for 17-year-olds and 13-year-olds that —

— There was an overall decline in quality of essays, as rated holistically;

— There was an increase in awkwardness, run-on sentences, and incoherent paragraphs, that is, "a diminishing of traditional organizational and transitional skills," a movement "away from established writing conventions toward those of spoken discourse" and journalistic style;

— "Mechanics are being handled adequately by the vast majority of students, and there is no evidence of deterioration in their use."

— Good writers are as good as they were — and there may be a few more of them — successfully handling longer and more complex constructions.

— Poor writers are worse than they were — and there are more of them — writing shorter, less coherent, stylistically sophisticated essays with more primer-type sentences.

The 9-year-olds appear to be doing better in nearly every respect. "They are still excited about language."

NAEP's observations regarding the meaning of the findings and possible causes for them appear both reasonable and helpful. For example, such comments as these appear:

— "There is no evidence here that the schools must 'go back to basics'; indeed, the basics seem to be well in hand."

— The declines in holistic scores reveal as much about scorers as they do about students. Language is always changing, and scorers may prefer standards of written expression that are becoming outmoded. New standards are certainly different, but they may not be *worse* in any defensible sense.

— Writing is intrinsically tied to reading; good readers are very often good writers and vice versa.

— As class size increases, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers to read essays. The less writing students do, the poorer they will be at written expression.

— Recent research in writing has demonstrated that there is a gap between textbooks about writing and the practice of professional writers. Few professional writers use topic sentences at all.

— Our society provides less and less motivation for writing.

— Both educators and parents should examine their assumptions about the importance of writing skills in this culture and the significance of decline in those skills.

— We have to recognize that teaching grammar is not teaching writing. Grammar is an important subject in its own right; there is no correlation, however, between ability to describe language and ability to use it.

There is more, and nearly every statement causes the teacher-reader to reflect on his/her own practices in teaching writing, results, knowledge of student growths, personal experience with writing, and values in education.

Voyagers

She sails through the doorway,
Gaudy as flamingoes
And purple-scented sails
In slow water breezes,
Real as ropey hair and bullskin boots,
Suspicious of my grounding
In tradition at the podium.

She stops on a prominent chair
And rolls a paperback for readings.
Only my slip moves her and she repeats,
"'Let us be truth to one another!'
That's where Arnold blew it:
Just 'true' was cool to him;
Being truth to one another,
That's where it's at."

She smiles, crossing her legs;
The flowered pennant on her seam
Breezes past a soiled knee,
Boot waving in air,
Closing in on reasons
For grandmother's lacings
Pushing up her prow.

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